

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3925

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 5231

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CG US

SUBJECT: APRES SHABA: MOBUTU'S MOOD AND PLANS

1. SUMMARY: MOBUTU RETURNED FROM THE SHABA TO A HERO'S WELCOME IN KINSHASA ON MAY 28. IN VARIOUS PUBLIC SPEECHES AND PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS SINCE THEN, HE HAS TEMPERED HIS PRIDE IN HIS POLITICO-MILITARY VICTORY WITH A CLEAR RECOGNITION THAT REFORMS MUST BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE ARMY, THAT HIS CIVILIAN ELITE HAS NOT SERVED HIM WELL AND THAT THE ECONOMIC STABILIZATION PROGRAM REMAINS AN OVERRIDING PRIORITY. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, MOBUTU HAS CUT OUT FOR HIMSELF A FOREIGN TRAVEL PROGRAM WHICH WILL KEEP HIM OUTSIDE ZAIRE FOR THE BETTER PART OF JUNE. END SUMMARY.

2. MOBUTU'S RETURN TO KINSHASA ON MAY 28 WAS TO A HERO'S WELCOME. THE POPULATION, WHICH IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE WAR WAS HAPPILY CONTEMPLATING HIS EARLY DEMISE, TURNED OUT ALONG THE PARADE ROUTE
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TO CHEER MOBUTU IN NUMBERS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE EARLY 1973. A COMBINATION OF MOBUTU'S MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC SUCCESS HAS MUTED BOTH POPULAR AND ELITE CRITICISM OF THE REGIME, AND THE VARIOUS PARTY, LABOR, YOUTH AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ARE TRYING TO OUTDO EACH OTHER IN ORGANIZING AND DEMONSTRATING FOR THE GUIDE. ALONG THE PARADE ROUTE, AT THE STADIUM AND IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION, MOBUTU EXUDED CONFIDENCE, PRIDE AND STRENGTH.

THE SHABA WAR, IN SUM, WAS THE BEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED TO MOBUTU IN A LONG TIME -- AND HE SEEMS DETERMINED TO KEEP UP THIS FAVORABLE MOMENTUM.

2. FOR EXAMPLE, MOBUTU INTENDS TO PARLAY THE VISION OF ZAIRE AS THE DEFENDER OF THE MODERATE AFRICAN FAITH -- A DEFENDER WITH MANY POWERFUL FRIENDS -- JUST AS FAR AND AS LONG AS HE CAN. HIS TRAVEL PLANS IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL TAKE HIM ON A TOUR OF THE REGIONS INSIDE THE COUNTRY AND THEN ON TO FRANCE, GERMANY, BELGIUM, MOROCCO, SENEGAL AND PERHAPS EGYPT, WHERE HE WILL THANK HIS HOSTS FOR HELP PROVIDED DURING THE WAR AND ALSO KEEP HIS IMAGE AS A STRONG AFRICAN LEADER BEFORE THE WORLD AND HIS DOMESTIC AUDIENCE. IN ADDITION, WHILE MOBUTU ORIGINALLY SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT CARRY HIS ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION INTO THE OAU SUMMIT, HE HAS MORE RECENTLY CONFIDED TO AN AMERICAN VISITOR THAT OTHER AFRICAN STATES MAY RAISE THE SOVIET/CUBAN ISSUE IN LIBREVILLE -- AT WHICH TIME HE WILL RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS THEY MIGHT ASK. HE ALSO HAPPENS TO HAVE PREPARED A "WHITE PAPER" WHICH HE IS PREPARED TO DISTRIBUTE. MOBUTU HAS CHOSEN THESE TACTICS BECAUSE HE SEES IT CLEARLY IN HIS INTEREST NOT TO LET THE ISSUES RAISED BY THE SHABA WAR FADE AWAY. HE KNOWS THAT THE DEEP ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SECURITY QUESTIONS WHICH FACED HIM BEFORE SHABA REMAIN. AS THE WAR HAS TURNED OUT THUS FAR HE HAS RECEIVED BOTH INCREASED ATTENTION AND SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS. HE'LL WANT TO KEEP THAT ATTENTION AND SUPPORT ALIVE.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, HE HAS PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR REFORM, ESPECIALLY IN THE ARMY. HE KNOWS THAT IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE FRANCE-MOROCCAN INTERVENTION, THE INVADERS WOULD HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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WALKED INTO KOLWEZI AND HIS REGIME WOULD HAVE CRUMBLLED. HE HAS BEGUN TO TALK ABOUT "TRAITORS" AND WE EXPECT A FAIRLY THOROUGH HOUSECLEANING, BOTH IN THE ARMY AND IN THE CIVILIAN ELITE. THIS TOO WOULD BE MOBUTU'S TRADITIONAL MODE OF COPING WITH A REBELLION/INCURSION -- A COMBINATION OF FOREIGN SUPPORT AND INTERNAL RESHUFFLINGS AND SECURITY MEASURES. BUT FROM WHAT WE CAN MAKE OUT, MOBUTU ALSO SEEMS DETERMINED TO ATTACK SOME OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS IN HIS ARMY. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO JUDGE, BUT HE SEEMS ON THE VERGE OF ACCEPTING BELGIAN/FRENCH RECOMMENDATION TO FORGET HIS GRANDIOSE VISION OF A SOPHISTICATED FORCE AND GET BACK TO BASIC UNIT TRAINING. THIS TREND, PLUS MOBUTU'S REITERATION AFTER SHABA THAT THE ECONOMIC STABILIZATION PROGRAM REMAINS THE OVERRIDING PRIORITY, COULD MEAN A REAL AND AUSPICIOUS CHANGE. WE HESITATE TO PREDICT, HOWEVER, THAT FUNDAMENTAL REFORM IS IN THE WINGS FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT THIS REMAINS A ONE-MAN REGIME AND THE REFORM AGENDA MOBUTU HAS CUT OUT FOR HIMSELF -- ARMY, PARTY (MPR CONGRESS RESCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER), THE ECONOMY, CORRUPTION -- IS TOO MUCH FOR ONE MAN. SOMETHING WILL INEVITABLY SLIP THROUGH THE WALLS. MAYBE A LOT OF THINGS.

WALKER

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